Monthly Commentary By Craig Washington

"Smokin' Room"

One chilly Wednesday evening last January, I found myself in a cozy candlelit room with over a dozen men. Comforted by the warmth of our communion and an overactive heater, we divided into groups of 3 or 4 and talked about what we liked and disliked about other gay (or "same-gender-loving", if you prefer) men. As we hit the "dislike" list, one gentleman offered, "I don't like sissies. You know those flamboyant queens." Alas, his words travelled farther than he might have expected. The remark pricked the ears of one young brother who then added to *his* group's list: "Gay men who don't like queens." Shortly afterward, the younger man headed for the door. He loudly announced to no one in particular, "I'm gonna walk outside for a smoke." "No," he corrected himself,"I'm going to sashay. You know how us queens like to sashay!" It was a moment of truth.

On another Wednesday evening last October, a well known black drag performer from Baltimore was attacked by a large group of youths, shot six times and left for dead. Fortunately, Leonard "Lynn" Vines survived the assault. Vine was going to pick up a key from his cousin's apartment when the thugs spotted him and said they "didn't allow no drag queen faggot bitches" into their neighborhood. One punched him then another shot him in his chest, back, and shoulder. He was released to his mother's care on November 3 and is now in a wheelchair. It will take awhile before he can return to his job with a housekeeping agency.

Some of you are gagging if you haven't already heard. Others may well be asking how did this happen and who is really to blame. What should we think about Miss Leonard? Should we assume that he might not have been attacked had he either butched it up or wore more fabulous drag? Perhaps he should have known better than to take his flamboyant self to "their" neighborhood. After all, don't we bring this on our selves when we wear "our sexual orientation on our sleeve"? Oh, excuse me, I said "we" when Leonard Vines is after all a drag queen. And it's those effeminate ones that make it difficult for the rest of us to be accepted. If it weren't for them, then we who conform to mainstream gender expression would not be reviled no matter how deviant our sex lives may be. Even though many of us "take it," it's alright as long as we "take it like a man." Why even Bishop Eddie Long would have to marry us if we scrubbed away the sissyness and snatched the sash out of our shay.

Don't get me wrong people. I am often turned on by a man in Timberlands or Oxford wingtips. I used to even think it was a compliment when straight folks mistook me for hetero. Wisdom and experience has brought me to a different place. I am not anti-butch, I just think sometimes we worship "Raheim" and "straight-appearing men" without looking at why. How much have we bought into a cult of masculinity that doesn't really work for "straight" men? Where do we draw the line of acceptable gayness and how dare, I mean, do we define a subculture of "superdeviants" out of the "deviant" lot of us? We don't need to "niggerfy" somebody in order to feel normal or good or powerful or beautiful or any of things that we, all of us, already are. Let us pray (or however else you send positive energy) for Leonard Vines and his family. Let us seek within our hearts the true lessons this incident holds for us.

Peace, CW

SUBMITTING ARTICLES TO

CLIKQUE

If you have something that you would like to share with the rest of us, please submit it to:

e-mail: clikquem@aol.com

Mail: 931 Monroe Dr. Ste 102-279 Atlanta, GA 30308

www.brotha.com/clikquem

a workshop series for gay men of African Descent.

Deeper LOVE

COME DISCOVER

Wednesday
January, 7, 14, 21, 28

6:30 to 9:00 pm

REGISTRATION $10.00

Men
Sexuality
Intimacy
Communication

More Than You Think

AID Atlanta
(404) 872-0600
www.aidatlanta.org

1438 West Peachtree Street

Please call Craig Washington
404-872-0600 ext. 271

Please register quickly • Space is limited

LAYOUT BY: